

**METHODS AND COMPOUNDS FOR MODULATING MELANOCORTIN
RECEPTOR LIGAND BINDING AND ACTIVITY**

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

This invention relates to methods and agonist/antagonist compounds for modulating melanocortin receptor-ligand binding. Also included is a method of identifying agonists and/or antagonists that bind to a ligand binding site for a melanocortin receptor of interest. Agonists and antagonists of ligand binding to melanocortin receptors also are provided. The invention is exemplified by identification and manipulation of the C-terminus of the human agouti related protein, which binds melanocortin receptors 3 and 4, and the production of AGRP peptidomimetics that are melanocortin receptor ligands. The methods can be applied to other melanocortin receptor agonists and antagonists.

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